DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 023 999 AC 003 043

By- Wilson, J. L. J.

Thirty-Eight Years in Adult Education.

Pub Date 63

Note- 19p.; Paper presented at the National Conference on Adult Education held at Warburton, Victoria, N.S.W., 1963

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.05

Descriptors- Administrative Policy, *Adult Education Programs, *Adult Educators, *Educational Finance, General Education, Historical Reviews, Labor Education, *Leader Participation, Participant Characteristics, Personal Growth, Social Change, *Student Participation, University Extension

Identifiers- Australia, New Zealand

In examining thirty-eight years in adult education, this document refers to nineteenth- and twentieth-century adult education which was influenced by some dynamic factors: personal and social dissatisfactions; an urgent desire for freedom and liberation; and a determination to change things for the better, for personal and social reasons. The Workingmen's College (1848), in taking a stage further the mechanics' institutes, athenaeums, working men's clubs, and other organizations concerned with adult education in the nineteenth century, had two outstanding aspects in their program: insistence on close companionship between tutor and student, and participation by students in the management of the college. The founders of adult education in New Zealand and Australia were products of the British adult education movement led by the Oxford dons and Albert Mansbridge. From their programs which were supported by limited funds from the governments of New Zealand and Australia and enthusiastic students, have come several national and local leaders. Adult education will continue to appeal to the minority but will remain the monument of liberation and freedom. (nl)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED 023999

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS

IN

ADULT EDUCATION

by

J. L. J. WILSON

AE000304 3

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS IN ADULT EDUCATION*

By J. L. J. Wilson

It is just 60 years ago that a new phase in adult education began in England. This was the university tutorial class method evolved by Oxford in conjunction with Mansbridge and the Workers' Educational Association. This new phase of adult education was a development, an expansion, of a very important earlier phase of adult education which Oxford and Cambridge had pioneered some 40 years earlier. And this University Extension Movement of the 'seventies and 'eighties was itself a development out of a multiplicity of adult education movements of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, of which an important example — but only one among many other ventures in bringing university men and workers together — was the Working Men's College in London, founded in 1848 by Professor F. D. Maurice. It is worth recalling, for a moment, this particular example, because its influence on the thinking of many university men was profoundly important. It was important because it took a stage further the mechanics, institutes, the athenaeums, the working men's clubs, and other bodies concerned with adult education which had proliferated in Britain in the early 19th century. The London Working Men's College brought together a remarkable band of university tutors, who gave their time free, and gave it prodigally. Among its tutors, it is interesting to note, were not only Professor Maurice and several Oxford, Cambridge and London professors, Eton schoolmasters and Inns of Court lawyers, but John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Lowes Dickenson, Tom Hughes (the author of "Tom Brown's Schooldays"), Dicey, the Marquess of Ripon, Alfred Lyttleton, Edward Burne Jones, Leslie Stephen, Fred Pollock and many other "eminent Victorians". The kind of spirit that animated some of these men is reflected in John Ruskin's "Fors Clavigera". Ruskin, nominally lecturing on art at Oxford as Slade professor, was critically concerned with the economic and spiritual problems of English national life. He was appalled at the state of affairs, and in one of the early numbers of "Fors", said, "For my own part I will put up with this state of things, passively, not an hour longer. . . . I simply cannot paint, nor read, nor look at minerals, nor do anything else I like, and the very light of the morning sky . . . has become hateful to me, because of the misery that I know of, and see signs of . . . therefore as I have said, I will endure it no longer quietly; but henceforward, with any few or many who will help, do my poor best to

* An address delivered at the 1963 National Conference on Adult Education at Warburton, Victoria.

abate this misery" (quoted H. P. Smith "Labour and Learning", Blackwell, Oxon). There are two things, among many, that seem to me to be notable in this college's history. One was the insistence from the outset of the college on close companionship between tutor and student. The principle followed by tutors seemed to be that of Chaucer's learned clerk "And he would gladly learn and gladly teach". And one method used to achieve this companionship was, to paraphrase a line from a Victorian poem—"to tire the sun with talking/And walk him down the sky.' The regular summer walk took place each Sunday for tutors and students from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., from the college to Epping Forest and back; 32 miles, followed by supper—tea and biscuits. It was, it may be remarked, the period in which men really believed in the virtues of a liberal education. The second important aspect was the stress laid upon student participation in managing the affairs of the college. It was a close partnership between students and tutors.

I cite this example to remind you that adult education had had a long history before university extension began, and before the university tutorial class-WEA development took place in 1903. Many working men who came to the Australian colonies in the 'sixties and 'seventies and later, and many middle-class settlers, brought with them the traditions and the vivid memories of mechanics institutes, athenaeums, working men's clubs and colleges, schools of arts and so on. The university extension movement came to Melbourne and Sydney Universities in the 'eighties. And we had here, for a time, the flowering of a miniature imitation of the British adult education scene. Mr. Noel Anderson for Victoria, Mr. Warburton for N.S.W., have been working on the histories of these early institutes and schools of art. The Association hopes, in the not-too-distant future, to publish their work.

It was, therefore, natural enough that in Australia and New Zealand, some working men and some university men should have been aware, in the early 1900s, of the new development in adult education that Oxford dons and Albert Mansbridge had initiated. Before 1911 inquiries were being pursued in England. Archbishop Temple, who had been an active tutor as a young man in the London Working Men's College, and a staunch supporter of Oxford and Mansbridge's venture, came out in that year and talked adult education to many influential people. Professor Wilson of Sydney, Sir James Barrett of Melbourne Universities and other colleagues met Mansbridge and Oxford dons at the Universities of the Empire Conference in London in 1912 and

talked tutorial classes all one afternoon session of that conference. The next year Mansbridge came out — to people in universities, in education departments and in trade unions, who knew him or of him. And late that year, 1913, Sydney University appointed a Director of Tutorial Classes and Dave Stewart founded the Workers' Educational Association. Melbourne acted in the same way at the same time. Dave Stewart, who from bitter experience knew how badly New Zealand needed education, went off there in late 1914, and successfully launched it there, in 1915.

It was, therefore, a decade-old, well-established institution in New Zealand when I first discovered it in 1925. The potted history I have traversed has been designed to give you some perspective. I have been connected with adult education for a mere, all-too-fleeting, 38 years. A relatively very short time indeed, even if we date the beginning of modern ideas about adult education only from the 1790s — and it does, of course, date from much earlier than that.

If, as G. M. Young has said, the essential matter of history is not so much what happened as what people felt about it as it was happening, then, as J. F. C. Harrison, the author of "Learning and Living, 1790-1960", has put it, "the history of adult education has to be examined through the ideas and attitudes of those taking part in it". And if this is so the ideas and attitudes of one who has had some part in it may not be history, but may provide some rubble out of which a pebble or so may be screened, mixed with the cement of fact, and used as a footing in some future historian's history of adult education in New Zealand and Australia.

What was the motivation, the inspiration that brought tutors and students together in the earlier days I have mentioned, that was still drawing them together in New Zealand and Australia in the mid-'twenties and later? What was, to use the sociologists' jargon, the dynamic of the movement in those days? In the 19th century in England, and it was still true in England in the first third of the 20th century, and it was true, too, in Australia and New Zealand — though with perhaps less sense of urgency until the great depression -- the dynamic of the movement was, essentially a product of dissatisfaction. A dissatisfaction both personal and social. I suspect that it is axiomatic that the individual who is satisfied with himself and satisfied with his way of life and society as it is, is almost never going to seek out adult education or to stay if brought into it. Discontent may be divine. But a desire for change of some kind, in oneself at least, and possibly

in one's way of life, or in the ways of society is, for the adult, one prime mover in seeking some means to remedy this state of affairs. Certainly it was true that for many people this sense of discontent may have been only partly conscious, and the reasons for this sense of malaise become apparent only under the stimulus of contact with new ideas, with similarly motivated persons, and with tutors who gave some sense of direction and purpose to the energies, emotional and intellectual, which gave force to this dissatisfaction. For very large numbers of people in Edwardian and Georgian society, the sense of dissatisfaction, personal and social, was reflected in many other ways than in adult education. The growth of the Trade Union movement and the Labour parties in the countries we are considering siphoned off enormous numbers to activities in these movements — offered them ideals, goals, and immediate practical tasks to which they could turn their energies. To only a tiny minority of these did adult education offer an attractive alternative. To many others, seeking something different, the frontier still offered a challenge and opportunities, a release from discontent with life as it was in whatever social group they had been born into. For the bulk of the population, then, as now, life was satisfactorily guided by what family, social, church and work group regarded as conventionally right for them to hear, to see, and to feel. To all such, adult education is rightly regarded not with suspicion only, but with hostility — for it is inevitably subversive of conventional ideas, habits and values; must challenge all that is comfortably taken for granted, or shut out of mind because it is disagreeable.

Personal and social dissatisfactions then were at the root of what brought students to adult education. A sense of the need to reform themselves or to reform society, or both. And the "philosophy" which motivated tutors was a not-dissimilar sense of dissatisfaction with a society in which advanced knowledge and ideas, learning and books, were still substantially denied to the mass of men and women kind. The 19th century's passionate conviction in the values of a liberal education was still very strong — and nowhere more strong than among many university men brought up in the tradition of University Extension, of the London Working Men's College, and the scores of similar movements of the late 19th century. And, for many younger and not a few older men, the 1914-18 war had brought a realisation of the need for drastic changes in their society, even to many of the most politically conservative.

The convictions and standing of such men had been instrumental in persuading universities and governments to provide

some funds for adult education, in the Australian states and in New Zealand. And so springing from the dissatisfactions of a tiny minority of students and tutors, with pitifully small resources, with very little leisure, but with a sense of mission, of adventure, this new adult education movement had come into being in the Antipodes.

If students in those early days came to education without very clear ideas of what they wanted from it, or what it could offer to them, tutors came with even more to learn about what adult education involved. The good tutors stayed and learnt, in the spirit of Chaucer's clerk. I recall my professor of history — who in those delightful days also taught economics — telling me in later years of his experience with the first three-year tutorial class he took at the Auckland Trades Hall. It was a tough group of trade union officials and rank and file and they gave him hell from the first week. At the end of three years, the professor confessed, he had been compelled to re-learn more economics and social history in those three years, from his students, than he had learnt from books in 20 years before. And the class had learnt things, too -- some they did not forget. One of the members of that class still speaks warmly, and gratefully, of his tutor (long dead). And we, in N.S.W. adult education, have not been the losers by his experience — for as Minister of Education and now Premier, that student has never ceased to be an ardent supporter of adult education. It is interesting, too, that this same class produced two Prime Ministers in New Zealand, and two others who became Ministers of State.

There was, in those days of the 'twenties and 'thirties in New Zealand adult education, and it was the same in Australia, a sense of adventure in ideas; a sense of companionship derived in part from being a member of a tiny minority of people — popularly regarded as all cranks and idiots to be interested in education; a sense of conflict and struggle; a sense of serious purposefulness; and a sense of all-in participation. Tutors and students learnt together, walked together (and how we walked!) and worked together. For, if we wanted anything done, it had to be done by ourselves alone. There were no resources we could call upon to pay for things to be done for us. We walked because even as late as the early 'thirties the only car possessed by anyone in the movement was that belonging to one of the tutors — a prosperous young lawyer who ever since his return from the war had been an active tutor, member of every working party, week-end or summer school, and would as cheerfully act as chief washer-up, transport officer, stage hand, or tent-erector as he

would as tutor. Later, he became a Vice-Chancellor and wrote the Report on the Future of Adult Education in New Zealand. To be competent at all these things was very necessary. I recall an advance party for one summer school of which he, the Director, two of the lecturers and I were members, as well as two other students. We had 120 students enrolled for the school to erect tents for, and 24 hours to do it in. When we reached the hill above the lovely valley where the school was to be pitched, we found three miles of steep unmetalled clay road leading down to it. It had rained for days previously, it was knee-deep in mud and our hired lorry driver wisely refused to attempt it. He dumped all the gear, and went back to Auckland. Since I was the only one with any knowledge of horses, I managed to borrow two and a sledge from a neighbouring farmer, and spent the rest of the day sledging the gear down the hill to the rest of the advance party. Somewhere about two that morning we had the last of the tents up. At ten the next morning the bus loads of students arrived, and I spent the day sledging their gear down the hill and pacifying the irate whose suitcases fell off in the mud. It rained nearly every one of the next ten days. The camp cook, a ship's cook, had a secret store of grog and was drunk more often than sober. So relays of students not only peeled spuds, washed up, cut firewood, but helped to cook; attended a heavy programme of lectures, walked, swam, argued, and danced late into the night in the one building we had — a lodge that was dining hall, lecture room, games room and dance floor — the only dry place in the camp. It was one of the most successful summer schools we had. Though no lectures were given in applied psychology, it was a great place to learn it. There was not much we didn't know about each other's character and characteristics before it ended. It says a great deal for the toughness of students in those days that the enrolment was even larger when we went back to the same place the following year. But this time we hired our cook through the New Zealand Temperance League.

I am not at all sure, you know, that the combination of hard work in camp chores, as well as solid lecture programme, was not a great stimulus to solid discussion. It was one in, all in, whether it was peeling spuds, waiting at table, or washing dishes. Lecturers were excused a fatigue only if their lecture was to be given immediately following. So one could find oneself peeling spuds before breakfast in a party that included a professor of economics, a lecturer in philosophy, the Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition, a farmer, a waterside worker and several office workers. The arguments were vigorous and usually carried

over into the discussion period of a lecture; and the rivalry in demonstrating efficiency in fatigues considerable. I recall that two of the best table waiters at one summer school were a professor of education and a future Prime Minister who were always put on roster together, because they competed so vigorously to demonstrate that education or politics was a better apprenticeship to competent table service than politics or education. And, as consumers, we were content to judge of this by the speed with which we were served our food.

If companionship was one of the by-products of adult education in those days, the conflict of ideas and opinions was its central attraction. Remember the 'twenties and the 'thirties, as in the earlier pre-war society, was one in which every aspect of society and all the values of the Victorian and Edwardian eras were under critical scrutiny. To most students, who had grown up in Edwardian society, in families in which the verities of Victorian society had seemed unchallengeable, the works of Ibsen, Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, Forster, Freud, Joyce, Galsworthy, Belloc, Chesterton, Strachey, Huxley, T. S. Eliot, were novelties that tutors were introducing to *us* for the first time. The Russian Revolution had revived interest in Marx and Lenin and political theorists of every kind. Marshall was still the staple in economics, but younger men like G. D. H. Cole with his Guild Socialism, and J. M. Keynes, were beginning to upset nearly every economics professor, and comfortable views about the functioning of capitalist society. To us, in New Zealand at least, the 'twenties were also a time when French Impressionistic Art was first available in prints and books, to read and grow excited about. And, a little later, the calamitous and bewildering onset of the world depression; the challenges of Fascism and then Hitlerism; the failures of the League of Nations; the menacing behaviour of Japan in Manchuria and China, were forces and events which tutors and students explored, analysed, argued about, and got very hot under the collar over. The need for thought *and* action was obvious and urgent.

It was not merely that students, old or young, were being introduced for the first time to a whole range of new writers, of iconoclastic ideas, of critical scrutiny of values which had been so long taken for granted. Intelligent tutors were also facing not only the challenge of adult education, which was in itself exciting, but were themselves being forced by the trend of world events, by the new writing which was coming forward, to re-evaluate their own subjects, ideas and positions. Adult education gave a further spur to their sense of the need to do this. For there was,

as I have said, an increasing sense of urgency in the air, and tutorial classes reflected this perhaps more faithfully than most other community groups.

It was not merely that, for a rural economy like New Zealand's, the frontier had petered out. Earlier than in Australia the cold breath of depression crept upon us in the late 'twenties as world agricultural prices slumped steadily, and as the tide of social and political criticism in the country mounted against the unitary government which had been stolidly and placidly conservative for so many decades. The only response of the conservative minded, in politics or in ordinary life, to a changing world situation was to angrily attack those who drew attention to change; those who flirted with new ideas of any kind — whether in economics and politics, or in art or literature. They wrapped a little more firmly round their necks the woolly scarves of Victorianism and deplored revolutionaries like Bernard Shaw. The treatment accorded that worthy when he came to New Zealand in the early 'thirties perfectly illustrates this point. The infant Broadcasting Commission refused to let him broadcast unless he submitted a script for prior approval. Shaw at first refused to do this — after all, he pointed out, not even the BBC had ever done this to him. Finally he was persuaded to do so by some of the adult education people who had shrilly protested to Wellington — and he broadcast a mischievous talk — on milk and revolutionary socialism as exemplified by the Wellington City Council. In this talk he contrived to answer a question frequently asked him since he had been in New Zealand. "What did I think of New Zealanders?" The indignation of the public, as voiced by and in the Press, was profound and extensive. It was even urged by some that he should be deported. I recall this broadcast vividly because, in those days, few students and many tutors had no wireless sets. Some 400 of us assembled in the adult education centre's hall to hear it and joyfully discuss Shaw and the Commission.

Adult education in New Zealand in those days was very small scale, and very poor. The four university colleges each provided a director, who was full time only in Auckland, and usually the Professor of Economics in the other three colleges. The Government grant was £400 per annum to each of the four centres. And in the early 1930s this was cut, entirely, for several years. Only the fact that the Carnegie Corporation had made, as in Australia, a five-year diminishing grant, enabled it to carry on. Tutors gave their services free, students volunteered a small increase in class fees, and everything carried on substantially as before. In

fact it was in this period that some expansion of the work took place, to try to reach the rural community. In Canterbury, Johnny Johnson devised the Box Discussion scheme — a method which enabled groups in country areas to get boxes of books, prints, records and lecture notes, meet to discuss them, and pass the box on to the next group. In Auckland, Norman Richmond devised an improvement on this, the Discussion Course scheme, a more flexible and less expensive scheme which could reach larger numbers. But both schemes were essentially improvisations dictated by poverty — every halfpenny had to be counted in those days. A few years later Western Australia, and later still Victoria, adopted and adapted Johnson's Box scheme; while N.S.W. borrowed the Auckland scheme. The excitement and stimulus these two new methods provoked in rural areas in New Zealand was considerable — remember this is before the days of cheap and effective radio sets; before any library facilities existed in the country; and at a time when most country roads were unmetalled, and the motor car never proceeded far into the country without having to get a horse to pull it out of the mud. But there were groups from remote Hokianga in the north to Southland within a year or two. The same success followed their introduction to Australia.

Improvisation, voluntary effort, a sense of mission, and a deadly seriousness of purpose were keynotes of student activities in those days. Class discussion was, to say the least of it, vigorous. During the depression I had a class which always got me, and itself, into trouble because of this. It was a Sunday morning class in the loco sheds. It met at 9 a.m. The students were all engine drivers and firemen — though they allowed, as a great concession, one signal man into it on the grounds that his father had been an engine driver and an original member of this class in 1915. All the others were sons or nephews of the members of that 1915 class. The fathers had been brought up on Marshall. I was a Keynesian. Most of my class were Marxists, though I doubt they had read the Great Man himself. The class, in Dunedin, was held in an unlined tin shed with a huge stove in the middle. The firemen prided themselves on having the stove red hot before I arrived. The discussion used to make even the tin walls white hot. It was rare for any of us to get back to Sunday dinner before 1.30 or 2. And my new young wife, and all their wives, used to complain long and loudly. Apart from the strain of discussion, the main trouble was the stove. There was no escape from its heat, or the acrid, breath-choking fumes it gave off. Sometimes we could hardly see each other across the room. It

was as tough a group, and as trying a four-hour class, as I have ever had — and as good. They read, they wrote, and they argued. Only once was I ever able to watch my class meet its match. This was when we held a joint meeting of fathers and sons. Engine drivers and firemen work under conditions of noise, which apparently make verbal communication, except at the top of one's voice, very difficult. Combine this innate impulse to shout with a clash of loyalties and ideas between followers of Marshall, Marx and Keynes, and filial disrespect, and not a little heat, and a very great noise is generated. The roof rattled.

When I left Dunedin to come to Sydney I felt proud that I was doing so in the cab of the second engine of my train, driven by my class secretary and fired by its librarian. I had forgotten that there are two very long tunnels going up hill out of Port Chalmers. Theirs was the last word, after all. I was still coughing and speechless 40 miles on, and blacker than night, when the train made its first stop.

My engine drivers and firemen were one kind of group. At the other end of the scale was one of the drama classes I had, some 40 strong, the eldest 30, and he was seven years older than any other member of the class, which had 14 Campbells in it. We put on a reading, once, of Toller's "Masses and Men" — and brought the wrath of the men of God upon us, for we met in a church hall. To their minds this was pure Communism. It was a pity they had not been present at the fierce discussion which had preceded our putting it on, when the group nearly came to blows because a minority wanted to prevent its being read because it seemed to them so clearly anti-Communist propaganda. There was one condition faithfully observed in that class — the tutor must finish the discussion at ten. Chairs were put back and the next hour was spent dancing Scottish reels and the Gay Gordons. With snow a not unusual external condition, this had its merits.

There was, in the 'twenties and 'thirties, little professional theatre in New Zealand. The many Little Theatres tended to stick to Barrie, Coward, Shakespeare, Sheridan and other established and respectable dramatists. We wanted to know more of the modern English and American and European dramatists, and several reading circles were formed out of which presently emerged a drama club. It pledged itself to produce only one play a year, and that something the group really felt worth spending a year getting ready — and in successive years the club produced plays by Quintero, Pirandello, Tchekov, O'Neil, Toller and others

which had never before been staged in New Zealand. Again, self help and improvisation was the rule. Everything from the stage itself, lighting set, scenery, had to be built by the members — on one occasion the producer decided, 48 hours before the first night, on changes which involved a complete rebuilding of the stage, proscenium and lighting set. A team of three student volunteers worked for a straight 24-hour stint and had it ready for the dress rehearsal. An interesting by-product of the theatre's impact was when, for the crowd scenes in Toller's "Masses and Men", we persuaded a bunch of tram drivers to take part. They became so keen that, told that some would have to wear beards for the performances, they grew them. Nearly all of them, becoming warmly attached to a tutor in the play, joined his class in Dante the following year and spent 30 weeks on that poet.

If we took ourselves very seriously in the drama, it paid off. Ragged and amateurish as our performances were, after the first year we began to earn interest. After its first year every one of the six performances the club restricted its season to was always booked out a fortnight before first night. And after the second year two experienced producers and some actors from other Little Theatres asked if they might join our club and help. It was from these humble beginnings that the post-war New Zealand Community Arts Service sprang.

For large numbers of those who attended classes, week-end and summer schools, adult education became an absorbing occupation. A living had to be earned — but outside working hours adult education was compulsive. There were so many things to be done. The part-time tutors gave generously of their time, and students and tutors and members of the WEA Council mucked in together to get jobs done. The process was enriching. It was this sense of mission that made the classes a springboard to wider interests and activities, and that in turn, stimulated further interest in the classes. The effort of all-in participation, the deep sense of companionship and common interests that were developed, were one of the essential products of the voluntary principle actuating the university-WEA partnership. The same thing was true in Australia in the 'twenties and 'thirties. It provided a further dynamic to tutor and student alike. But this process is, I believe, possible only up to some point in the scale of growth. Once the scope of an organisation grows beyond a certain point, once the numbers involved grow too large, this kind of momentum begins to be lost. There are, of course, other factors which may affect a movement such as adult education

was in the 'twenties and 'thirties in New Zealand and Australia. Adult education in those days was compounded of many of the same elements that J. F. C. Harrison has noted in his history of adult education in Yorkshire. It was, essentially, a movement for freedom and liberation, both personal and social. It was strongly motivated, as I remarked earlier, by dissatisfaction — by discontent, personal and social, with "states of affairs", which men and women felt and took very seriously. It involved striving, struggle and self-sacrifice. And because it was a movement that appealed to only a minority, and from lack of resources could attempt to cater only for a minority, this minority marked itself off from their work, family and social group as in a sense subversive of established conventions and values within these groups — whether they were middle class or working class, urban or rural dwellers. And inherent in the broad motivation which brought people to classes; in the amused or alarmed contempt or suspicion with which they were regarded by their peer groups; in the challenge of new ideas, new values, and in the stimulus of fellow students and tutors, the reading and the writing they were doing — inherent in all these things was a sense of dramatic conflict which sharpened apprehension, and was a spur to learning. Change, social, political, economic and cultural was in the air and students were themselves, to some degree, agents through which change was being brought about. Old ways of thinking, acting, and believing were being questioned — and they were among the instruments of change, challenging the established order, in however humble and simple a way.

And not all the change was humble, not all the challengers remained simple, ordinary folk. Many men and women whose lives had been influenced to some greater or less degree by adult education went on to play significant roles in their community, in one way or another. In trade unions, in local government, in national politics, in education and social community services of many different kinds — the enhanced contribution made by them could be seen — in England, in Australia, in New Zealand. It was not accidental that a majority of Cabinet Ministers in the first New Zealand Labour government should have been active participants in adult education in earlier years; that the very conservative Vice-Chancellor of Otago University should remark to me, the morning after the election which had swept Labour into power, "Well, thank goodness we'll have a really first-class Minister for Education at last." And when I asked who, said to me with surprise, "Why your late WEA President, of course." This man had been, also, for 20 years, chairman of the

Otago Education Board. He subsequently became the third of the four New Zealand Prime Ministers who had taken an active part in adult education. N.S.W. and other states can provide similar examples, notably the late Mr. Chifley and Sir William McKell.

There were others, too, a small group, the courses of whose lives were vitally affected by adult education. New Zealand was earlier than universities in Australia in granting bursaries or exhibitions to a limited number of tutorial class students to do a university course. One of Auckland's early bursars was a railway porter, who later filled a senior lectureship in economics in Perth, and became, later still, a professor in Wellington. Perhaps his most signal achievement was to be asked by the professor of history to take over, for a year, the whole of the first year course in history because the professor was ill. The bursar was, himself, at the time, only an undergraduate doing second year history. But such was the impression he had made, the Professorial Board endorsed the use of this undergraduate in place of the professor.

Another Otago bursar was a shepherd, a Scot, who had started work at 11. He applied, aged 60, and after interview was granted a bursary. Five years later he graduated with a first in philosophy. The incoming Chairman of your Association, Mr. Hely, like your outgoing Chairman, was an Auckland bursar. There were a number of other men and women in New Zealand, and after 1943 in N.S.W., who went from adult education to the university, and from thence to important roles in some field of adult education or to other service in the community. One I like to recall was a railwayman in an isolated up-country station in Otago, where a class had been held for several years. He had been awarded a bursary and applied on these grounds for a transfer to Dunedin in order to attend the university. The then very autocratic General Manager of the Railways ordered his special train to stop at the would-be university student's tiny station and summoned him to the presence, demanding to know what the hell was he thinking of. The man got his transfer. As soon as he had completed his degree he was moved into the Wellington office as the Great Man's P.A. and later moved up to one of the most senior positions.

But the most remarkable men and women in adult education, here in Australia, as in New Zealand, have been the university and other tutors who made such things possible. They have been, through decades, the foundation upon which adult education has been built. Without their enthusiasm, their self-sacrifice, and the zest they have had to communicate not only knowledge, but the

spirit of learning and scholarship, and the things these stand for in terms of civilised values, adult education could not have changed so much in the lives of so many. And this, looking back over nearly 40 years of adult education, in one experience, has been seen to happen many times.

I have spent a disproportionate amount of time, and drawn most of my examples from New Zealand experience, neglecting the 28 singularly stimulating years I have spent in adult education in Australia — at the University of Sydney, in the Australian Army Education Service, for a short period, re-starting "CAB" at the Commonwealth Office of Education. Most of what I have said about New Zealand was equally true of my early years in N.S.W. The depression was still as acute here, as it had been in the Dunedin I had left to come here. The sense of the urgency of social, economic and political problems was just as strongly reflected in classes in Sydney railway workshops, in country towns, in unemployed Relief Camps, or in city classes as it had been in New Zealand. Week-end or summer schools at Newport, drama club activities, tramps with the Naturalists Club, brought the same sense of close companionship. The impending threat of war slowly took the place of the grim shadow of the depression. As the one lightened, the other darkened. But the activities of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin in the late 'thirties had nothing like the same immediacy to the average student that social and economic injustice had had in the earlier years. Many refused to face the possibility that war would eventuate; and in city and country one would frequently be challenged by the assertion that it was all "nothing but the sensation-seeking of the newspapers". I have occasionally run across men or women in recent years who recall to me lectures I gave 25 years ago in some N.S.W. country town, who remind me of their then scepticism about my dim views of Hitler's and Musso's aims.

Came the war and presently the exciting challenge of Army Education. That, as Kipling said, is another story. It taught all those concerned in adult education many valuable lessons. And the Service, now the Royal Australian Army Education Corps, has remained as a permanent and important part of the Army. One of its legacies was the "Current Affairs Bulletin" which, in its own way, makes, I believe, a uniquely important contribution to adult education in Australia.

With adult education and its developments in the post-war world you are as familiar as I am. The stimulus given by the experience of the war years and by the operation of Army

Education was a springboard for adult education. Universities and governments together were at last open to the conviction that adult education was an important fourth wheel in the educational coach. And the long, frustrating years of wretchedly inadequate finance and staff for adult education gave way, here and in New Zealand, to more generous allocations and grants. That they are still inadequate to the tasks of adult education we all know to be true. But when one compares their present scale with that of the 'twenties and 'thirties, the nearly 20-fold increase of these post-war years underlines the appalling financial starvation endured by adult education in the pre-war years. Adult education was then, as I have stressed, a minority movement for these, among other reasons. But it was a minority that knew what it loved, and worked to get what it knew.

The changes in every aspect of life in post-war Australia, as we know, have been profound. They have affected adult education in a great many ways, apart altogether from the institutional and programmatic changes which have taken place within adult education and which, imperfectly, reflect some of these external changes.

I want to spend my last few minutes looking back and forward. I have suggested that the dynamic of adult education throughout the 19th and the first half of the 20th century was one of personal and social dissatisfactions; an urgent desire for freedom and liberation; a determination to change things for the better, for personal and social reasons. Education was seen as a means to secure personal, social, economic and political change that would alleviate the misery, spiritual, social and economic, that had so poignantly affected Ruskin; that has inspired so many tutors since his day. The *will* to learn drove this tiny minority, the students, because it was inspired by deep social purpose, a deep sense of mission in their community. The desire to *learn* as well as to teach, inspired tutors to that close companionship with their students that was, and still is, essential to success in adult education.

Not by any means alone through adult education, but in large measure because adult education taught men and women in every walk of life — students and tutors alike — the need for changes, and equipped them to help in making them, these changes have come about — in educational and social, economic and political affairs. And, having come about, the dynamic and social relevance of adult education has ceased to provide the driving force which existed up to World War II. This does *not* mean, as some people

are apt to think, that adult education no longer has a social relevance; that no dynamic exists to be harnessed. All experience of adult education, and especially that of these post-war years, yields evidence to the contrary. It may seem paradoxical, but the fact that the gross educational inequalities of the past have been banished; that a larger proportion of the total population than ever before can benefit from full secondary and some form of tertiary education, has increased, not decreased, the need and the demand for adult education. This despite the fact that for very large numbers of people the idea of continuing their education in adult life is probably no less unattractive now than it was in the past. Trenaman* has suggested, as a result of his survey, that 45 per cent of the population are pretty constantly resistant to new ideas and cultural values. Three-quarters of the population have never attempted any form of further education; and only in about ten per cent of the population does there appear to be any sustained interest in continuing education. Though these figures relate to England, it seems improbable that a similar survey in Australia would reveal wide differences. Although, on the basis of Trenaman's survey we may accept that 55 per cent of the population are not resistant to new ideas or to changing their cultural values, the important figures are the 26 per cent and the ten per cent. Whether we like it or not they indicate that adult education is still likely to be, as it has been in the past, a minority movement. This should not disturb us as educationalists. If our concern is with seeking to help men and women to widen and deepen their education; if our aim is to encourage them to grapple with problems in depth, and not to skim the surface of things, not ten times our present resources of men and money would enable us to do this properly for more than some small fraction of the population. Something under two per cent of the population in N.S.W. is currently engaged in adult education courses through the universities, Education and Technical Education departments, WEA and other bodies—yet among these 70,000 or so people are very large numbers who play now, or may play in the future, significant roles in their family, social and work groups, and in their communities at local, state and national levels. If resources were available we could perhaps double or treble that number, and what is far more important than quantity, improve qualitatively the kind of provision made. And quality, in adult education, depends a great deal on the kind of relationship developed between tutors and students.

If it be true, as I asserted a few moments ago, that there is

* "Education for the Adult Population, Part I": *Adult Education*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1957.

not a smaller but a greater need for adult education now and in the future than even in the past, what are its tasks, what is to be its social relevance, what dynamic is to supply the motivations that give students a *will* to learn as strong as that of the past?

It is to be found, I think, in the effects of the Technological Age we have entered, upon education and upon the institutions and functioning of free societies. The demands of the Technological Age upon education are for ever increasing and narrower specialisation, at all levels and in every field. The application of this highly specialised education in industry and commerce is to increase the production of goods which yield material satisfactions. But to do this has required also profound changes in nearly every aspect of our economic and social life, in the structure and functioning of the institutions of free societies; in the relations between individuals and their society; in the relations between societies.

The economic reordering of society made inevitable by modern technology, and the material satisfactions and relative security which have followed therefrom are means only. Modern science and technology can tell us nothing about human ends; about how to use material satisfactions to achieve the good life. Nor can they tell us anything about how to order our own lives, and the life of society, so that the "good life" can be attained and maintained. This is the province of the arts and the humanities. A very great deal is talked about the necessity for wider and more general knowledge about science. No doubt this would be a good thing. But the imperative necessity if free societies are not to be destroyed by our own ignorance and that of scientists, is that many more men and women, and especially scientists, learn more about the values which underpin free societies. For it is upon men's knowledge and understanding of human relations and human affairs, upon their scales of human values, that the right ordering of free societies will depend. It is idle to imagine that a radical transformation of the economic life of the community, a drastic reordering of its economic institutions, can take place without vitally affecting all the other important institutions and values of free societies. Of such matters nothing is to be learnt in science texts or technical handbooks. A knowledge of human affairs and human institutions can be gained only from mature adult experience and from long and profound study of them, in the arts and in literature, in the humanities and social sciences. Only through continuing education in adult life will men acquire the scales of values and the breadth of vision, the tolerance and sensibility requisite to understanding the problems of other individuals, groups, and societies; and only through these studies will

men acquire the knowledge and the understanding essential to grapple with the consequences of rapid technological change on the concepts of freedom and the institutions of free societies. The great danger inherent in the "Clash of Cultures" is that we shall allow ourselves to be deluded into believing that Science and Technology know the answers to the problem of the human condition. To allow this claim is to surrender our lives and our government to the slide rule, the electronic computer, and the "human engineer", and to enter a technological totalitarianism.

This, then, is the new social relevance of adult education. As Harrison has observed, adult education "was always ambivalent at any given time: it was both a force for social change and a reflection of a social state". And herein lies the essential dynamic for adult education in Australia. We face in the future, internally and externally, a state of rapid and continuous change, for which the education we received in the past, and even less the education youth is receiving today, did and does little to prepare us or them. If as individuals and members of our community we are to learn how to adjust to change in ways that will maintain and enhance the basic civilised values we prize, then we must learn to understand the nature and meaning of those values more thoroughly, and learn how best they may be preserved.

This is not a programme of adult education that will appeal to the multitude. In one respect adult education has changed very little since its earliest days. It is, and will remain if it is serious in its purposes, a minority group. It is, and it will remain as in the past, on the frontiers of widening opportunities, a movement for freedom and liberation. It is, and it will remain as in the past, if it is to be true to its purposes, an educational movement in which the emphasis is on striving and struggle by people who give generously of their time and effort in order to help others and to help themselves; who "gladly learn and gladly teach". And it will, above all, if it be wisely led, remember the two great secrets of the success of adult education in the past: the two things I was at pains to stress earlier — the enormous educational value of the close companionship of tutor and student, and of voluntary effort and the sacrifices it entails. There is no substitute for them in adult education.

ERIC Clearinghouse
NOV 1 8 1968
on Adult Education

AMBASSADOR PRESS, SYDNEY